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**Title :** Feeding habits and trophic position of two otariid species *Zalophus californianus* and *Arctocephalus townsendi*, at San Benito Islands, B.C. Mexico.

**Category :** Ecology

**Student :** M.A./M.S.

**Preferred Format :** Oral Presentation

**Abstract :** California sea lions and Guadalupe fur seals were exploited during the XIX and XX centuries. Sea lion exploitation was lower and nowadays it's the most abundant pinniped in México. On the contrary, fur seals were reduced to near extinction and confined to Guadalupe Island. Even though the slow recovery of the population, sightings of animals outside Guadalupe Island like in San Benito Islands, may indicate an expanding population. But, why this recovery has been so slow?. One hypothesis could be that sea lions occupied the space left over by fur seals, and may represent a potential space and food competitor. That's why it's of interest to determine the population structure, the important preys, diversity and breadth of the diets, and the trophic position of both predators in the same habitat. The San Benito Islands were sampled during winter and summer of 2001 and 2002. Population censuses and scat collections were conducted. The scats were rinsed and fish otoliths and cephalopod beaks were removed and identified. The prey Importance Index, Shannon Diversity Index, niche overlap Levin's Index and the Omnivory Index and Trophic Position according to Christensen and Pauly (1992) were quantified. A total of 218 fur seal scats were collected recovering 1803 cephalopod beaks and 83 otoliths. Sixty two percent contained cephalopod remains, 12% fish remains, 40% seaweeds and 2% pelagic red crabs. From the 289 sea lions scats, 1253 otoliths and 242 cephalopod beaks were recovered and 63% of the scats had fish remains, 25% cephalopod beaks and 7% pelagic red crabs. The squid *Loligo opalescens* was the most important prey of the fur seals; and for sea lions the fish *Argentina sialis*, *Sebastes* sp. and *Merluccius angustimanus*, and also *Loligo opalescens*. The diversity of the diet of the fur seals was lower than the sea lions.